

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 DHA-05 IO-13 ACDA-07 /084 W
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R 031001Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5528
INFO AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
USMISSION USBERLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 07102

E.O.11652; GDS
TAGS; PGOV, PINT, PINS, GE
SUBJECT; WHY HAS THE GDR THROWN THE BOOK AT ONE
DISSIDENT AND RELEASED FIVE OTHERS?

REF: A) USBER 2278; B) BERLIN 6984; C) BERLIN 7021
D) BERLIN A-74

1. AN INTRIGUING ASPECT OF RECENT GDR TREATMENT OF
DISSIDENTS IS THE CONTRAST IN THE REGIME'S TREATMENT OF
RUDOLF BAHRO WHO HAS BEEN CHARGED WITH "INTELLIGENCE
ACTIVITIES" ON BEHALF OF THE FRG (REF B) AND THE
RELEASE FROM PRISON AND EXPULSION TO THE WEST OF FIVE
OTHERS (REF C). THIS SEEMINGLY INCONSISTENT BEHAVIOR
COULD HAVE SEVERAL EXPLANATIONS BUT THE MOST LIKELY IN
OUR VIEW IS THAT THE GDR AUTHORITIES PERCEIVED TWO
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DIFFERENT KINDS OF THREAT AND REACTED ACCORDINGLY.

2. BAHRO IS A LONG-TIME ACTIVE SED PARTY MEMBER WITH
SOMETHING OF A REPUTATION AS A HARD-LINER AND ALSO A
MEMBER OF THE TECHNICAL AND MANAGERIAL CLASS ON WHOM SO
MUCH OF THE ECONOMIC STRENGTH AND PROGRESS OF THE COUNTRY
MUST INEVITABLY DEPEND. AS SUCH HIS

DISENCHANTMENT AND CRITICISM OF SOCIALISM AS IT HAS DEVELOPED IN THE GDR, AND ESPECIALLY HIS REJECTION OF THE INDUSTRIAL AND BUREAUCRATIC CHARACTER OF THE SYSTEM, STRIKES VERY CLOSE TO THE HEART OF THE ENTIRE STRUCTURE, THE LOYALTY OF THE PARTY AND MANAGERIAL CADRES. HOWEVER, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT HIS HERETICAL VIEWS WERE MORE OR LESS TOLERATED AS LONG AS HE KEPT THEM IN HOUSE. IT IS CERTAINLY A FACT THAT BAHRO SUBMITTED HIS MANUSCRIPTS FOR PUBLICATION IN THE EAST BEFORE HE WENT WEST AND WAS THEREFORE KNOWN TO THE STATE SECURITY SERVICE FOR SOME TIME BEFORE HIS ARREST. IT ALSO SEEMS INCONCEIVABLE THAT THE AUTHORITIES IN THIS COUNTRY HAD NOT BEEN AWARE OF HIS VIEWS AND HIS WRITINGS FOR SOME TIME BEFORE HE ACTUALLY HAD A FINISHED MANUSCRIPT IN HAND. HOWEVER, THEY MADE NO OVERT MOVES AGAINST HIM OF WHICH WE ARE AWARE. THE SITUATION THEN CHANGED RADICALLY WHEN BAHRO VIOLATED PARTY AND STATE DISCIPLINE AND SENT HIS WRITINGS TO THE WEST FOR PUBLICATION AND ARRANGED FOR INTERVIEWS WITH DER SPIEGEL AND ON WEST BERLIN TELEVISION. SUCH A MOVE HAS PROVED IN THE PAST TO BE AN INTOLERABLE PROVOCATION TO THE EAST GERMAN AUTHORITIES. FROM WHAT BAHRO TOLD DER SPIEGEL (REF. C) IT IS EVIDENT THAT HE HIMSELF ANTICIPATED THAT TAKING HIS VIEWS OUTSIDE OF THE SOCIALIST CAMP WOULD LEAD TO HIS ARREST.

3. THE FIVE DISSIDENTS RELEASED FROM PRISON LAST WEEK AND
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EXPELLED TO THE WEST WERE NOT PARTY STALWARTS NOR ESSENTIAL MEMBERS OF THE PRODUCTIVE APPARATUS OF THE COUNTRY AND THE NATURE OF THEIR CRITICISM WAS FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT FROM BAHRO'S. THEY HAD CALLED FOR FULL IMPLEMENTATION IN THE GDR OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS ASPECTS OF THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT, HAD APPLIED TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY, OR HAD SIGNED THE BIERMANN PETITION. HOWEVER, NONE OF THEM ADVOCATED THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE SOCIALIST STATE AND SYSTEM AS SUCH AND NONE EVEN APPROACHED THE ULTIMATE HERESY ADVOCATED BY BAHRO, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ORGANIZED MARXIST OPPOSITION WITHIN THE GDR. IN ADDITION, BAHRO HAD DIRECTLY CRITICIZED THE SOVIET UNION, AN ACT WHICH MAY HAVE PUT HIM IN SPECIAL JEOPARDY IN THE GDR. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT THE FIVE WERE ALSO IMPRISONED WHEN THEIR DISSENT BECAME PUBLIC IN THE WEST (THROUGH LETTERS TO PRESIDENT CARTER, PETITIONS TO THE UN OR THROUGH THE BIERMANN PETITION) BUT NONE OF THEM FACED CHARGES FOR ANYTHING LIKE ESPIONAGE. IN FACT THEY HAD BEEN IMPRISONED WITHOUT ANY CHARGE WHATSOEVER AS THE GDR WRESTLED WITH THE DILEMMA OF WHETHER TO TRY THEM PUBLICLY AND THEREBY RAISE THE WHOLE DISSIDENT ISSUE TO A MUCH HIGHER LEVEL OF INTERNAL VISIBILITY OR TO SIMPLY GET RID OF THEM TO THE WEST AS HAD

BEEN THE CASE WITH SO MANY OTHER EAST GERMAN DISSIDENTS.

4. ANOTHER MOTIVATION FOR THE GDR WHICH MUST BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IS THE APPROACH OF THE BELGRADE CONFERENCE ON THE HELSINKI ACCORDS. TO KEEP DISSIDENTS IN PRISON WITHOUT CHARGE OR BECAUSE OF THEIR ATTEMPTS TO EMIGRATE WOULD RENDER THE GDR EVEN MORE VULNERABLE TO CRITICISM ON HUMAN RIGHTS GROUNDS THAN IT WOULD BE OTHERWISE. TO CHARGE BAHRO WITH WORKING FOR A FOREIGN POWER MAY APPEAR A LESS RISKY PUBLIC RELATIONS APPROACH TO HIS CASE, EVEN THOUGH IT MAY BACKFIRE BADLY IF THE WESTERN PRESS TAKES UP HIS CAUSE IN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BERLIN 07102

EARNEST. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT THE GDR SOUGHT TO EMPHASIZE ITS DISAPPROVAL OF BAHRO AND TO GIVE A WARNING TO ANY LIKE-MINDED PARTY MEMBERS BY THE MANNER IN WHICH HIS ARREST WAS ANNOUNCED IN THE LOCAL PRESS. WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL SHORT ANNOUNCEMENTS OF ESPIONAGE ARRESTS IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS, BAHRO WAS THE ONLY ONE IDENTIFIED BY NAME. WHILE THE CLOSE TIMING OF THE TWO EVENTS IS CERTAINLY NOT ENTIRELY COINCIDENTAL, IT MAY BE THAT THE GDR HAS MADE RELATIVELY SEPARATE DECISIONS TO SILENCE DISSENT WITHIN ITS OWN PARTY STRUCTURE AND TO CLEAR THE RECORD OF A NUMBER OF LINGERING DISSENT CASES BEFORE BELGRADE. BOLEN

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